

SPRING 2004

The Tribal Update is a quarterly publication of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. It is distributed to leaders of all eight state and federally recognized tribes, as well as other interested parties.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

TRIBAL UPDATE



Tribal Subcommittee Recommendations Enhance State Medicaid Redesign Plan

The Montana Public Health Care Advisory Council in April adopted several changes to the state Medicaid redesign project that were proposed by its Native American subcommittee.

“We’ve been so pleased at how hard-working and productive the subcommittee has been,” said Gail Gray, director of DPHHS. “Because the issues of Native American health care represent unique challenges in terms of cultural and intergovernmental relationships between tribes and the state and federal governments, the subcommittee has been an invaluable part of this redesign process.”

“We hope the positive relationship we’ve forged during this process will continue for some time to come,” she added.

Governor Judy Martz appointed the advisory council and the Native American subcommittee last fall to help the state redesign its \$650 million Medicaid program. The 2003 Legislature called for the redesign in response to a rapid increase in the number of people eligible for Medicaid and a doubling of the program’s costs over the past decade.

“Last year, the state spent about \$65 million for Medicaid services for Native Americans who don’t live on the reservations,” said Peter Blouke, coordinator of the redesign project. “So obviously it was pretty important for us to get input from the tribes.”

Blouke noted that the federal government pays all costs of services provided on reservations through the Indian Health Service and tribal health departments. Off the reservations, the state is required to pay 25 percent of the cost of services for all Medicaid recipients.

The purpose of the Medicaid redesign process has been to undertake a

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Medicaid *(continued from page 1)*

comprehensive review not only of existing eligibility criteria and health benefits provided through Montana's Medicaid system, but also to examine the structure and values that are its fundamental underpinnings.

"This wasn't intended as a cost-cutting exercise," Blouke stressed. "It's intended to reframe the program in a way that allows it to be financially sustainable into the future. We want to contain costs and focus health care resources on those who need them the most."

The Public Health Advisory Council has adopted 16 recommendations that it intends to present to the governor and 2005 Legislature. The Native American subcommittee specifically asked DPHHS to:

- Work with the tribes to foster a spirit of cooperation and identify current institutional barriers limiting the participation of tribal members in the Medicaid program and develop strategies, including education, to improve the mechanics of providing Medicaid services to American Indians.
- Ask the federal government to pay all costs of Medicaid services for Native Americans regardless of whether services are provided on or off reservations.
- Develop a process to periodically review Native American eligibility issues as they related to Medicaid, and include Native American representation in the development of the process.
- Explore the feasibility of a demonstration waiver to delegate authority to the eligible tribes for certification of Medicaid eligibility.

The Native American subcommittee met for the last time on April 27. The full advisory council will wrap up its work at a meeting May 25. Tribal councils will have an opportunity to comment on all proposals.

For more information about the Medicaid redesign, contact Blouke at 406-444-3709 or pblouke@state.mt.us; or John Chappuis, state Medicaid director, at 406-444-4084 or jchappuis@state.mt.us.

21 percent of traffic fatalities in Montana occur among Native Americans. Seat belts can help prevent such fatalities.

Grant to Support Youth Suicide Prevention Conference in June

As part of an initiative by Governor Martz to prevent youth suicide in Montana, DPHHS has awarded a grant of \$10,000 to the Indian Development and Education Alliance (IDEA) in Miles City.

The money will be used to support a youth suicide prevention conference to be held in Billings in early June. The goal of the conference will be to reduce the incidence of suicidal behavior among Montana Indians aged 10 to 24 and to improve access for youth to appropriate prevention and intervention services.

In the last 10 years for which statistics are available, 24 Native Americans aged 10 to 24 took their own lives, according to the DPHHS Office of Vital Statistics.

IDEA plans to invite 28 Native American students—two from each tribal nation and urban center—to attend the two-day conference. They will be asked to discuss and write a strategic plan for teen suicide prevention for each local community. They also will be asked to identify the knowledge and abilities needed to be a Native American teen suicide prevention advocate and peer counselor.

For further information, contact Ernie Big Horn, director of IDEA, P.O. Box 726, Miles City, MT 59301, 406-234-6112.

Chippewa Cree to Administer Public Assistance Program

The Chippewa Cree Tribal Business Council has formally notified DPHHS of its intention to operate its own Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The council also has completed negotiating with the department on the amount of funding the tribe will receive through a Tribal TANF Block Grant, according to Hank Hudson, administrator of the Human and Community Services Division of DPHHS.

The tribe plans to serve all eligible Indians in Hill County. The department will be working with the tribe to coordinate Food Stamp and Medicaid eligibility, Hudson said.

TANF is a federally funded program that provides cash assistance and employment and training services to low-income families. The funds may be used for a variety of purposes designed to help those in poverty become more self-sufficient.

For more information, contact Hank Hudson at 406-444-5902 or hudson@state.mt.us.

Tribes Can Administer Own Child Support Enforcement

On March 30, the federal government published new regulations aimed at federally recognized tribes and tribal organizations that wish to implement their own child support enforcement programs.

The regulation carries out provisions of the 1996 welfare reform law as amended by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, which for the first time provided the option of direct funding.

The rule outlines the process by which tribes and tribal organizations can apply for federal funding. Tribes have been able to apply under interim rules since August 2000.

Initially the federal government will pay 90 percent of reasonable and necessary costs of the programs. Tribes and tribal organizations will be required to contribute 10 percent.

To receive funding, tribes have to meet the objectives of the program, including establishment of paternity; modification and enforcement of support orders; collection and distribution of support; and location of non-custodial parents.

To learn more about the new regulations, visit the U.S. Administration for Children and Families Web site at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/fct/tribal.htm>.

Qualified Expert Witness Training Offered in June

The Child and Family Services Division of DPHHS will offer its fourth annual training for individuals who would like to be listed in the Qualified Expert Witness Handbook.

The training will be held June 2-3 at the Red Lion Colonial Inn in Helena.

The handbook was developed to help social workers and county attorneys identify individuals who can testify in state District Court in child protective cases involving Native American children. Expert witnesses are called upon to testify to the prevailing social, cultural and childrearing practices of their respective tribes.

Under the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, the use of qualified expert witnesses is intended to ensure that the involuntary placement of an Indian child in foster care or the termination of the parent-child legal relationship does not conflict with cultural values of the child's tribe.

The state will reimburse those attending the training for mileage, meals and lodging costs at state rate.

For more information, contact Janet Kracher, Indian Child Welfare program specialist, at 406-444-9748 or jakracher@state.mt.us.

Child and Family Services to Hold Tribal Forum in May

The Child and Family Services Division of DPHHS will hold a tribal forum May 11 in Helena to seek input as it develops a five-year State Child and Family Services Plan for Title IV-B.

The plan must address child welfare services, family preservation and support, adoption promotion and support, child abuse prevention and treatment, education and training vouchers, and child welfare waiver demonstrations.

The division has invited tribal chairmen and social service directors to attend the forum.

For more information, contact Janet Kracher, 406-444-9748 or jakracher@state.mt.us.

The immunization rate among Native American children in Montana is higher than the state average.

DPHHS Staff Plan to Attend Tribal Relations Events

DPHHS staff who work regularly with Montana tribes plan to take part this summer in two events aimed at improving their understanding of Native American needs, rights, and culture.

The first is a tribal relations workshop to be held June 9 and 10 in Helena. The other is a “cultural immersion camp” to be held the week of August 9 near Billings.

The events help DPHHS to meet the intent of House Bill 608, which was sponsored by Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy during the 2003 legislative session. The bill requires the state to provide training at least once a year on the legal status of tribes, the legal rights of tribal members, and social, economic, and cultural issues of concern to tribes.

Native American Advisory Council to Meet May 18-19

The DPHHS Native American Advisory Council will meet May 18 and 19 in Room C-209 of the Cogswell Building, 1400 Broadway, in Helena.

Among the items on the agenda are:

- A discussion of the Youth Suicide Prevention Conference to be sponsored by the Indian Development and Education Alliance (see page 2).
- An explanation of the new WIC funding formula.
- A presentation on planning for the 2006-2007 biennium by the Human and Community Services Division of DPHHS.
- Presentations by the Montana ICWA Association, Montana Disability and Health Advisory Board, Disability Determination Outreach Services, Low Income Energy Assistance Program, State Chemical Dependency programs, and Montana Independent Living Program.

The Native American Advisory Council is made up of representatives of each reservation, the Little Shell Tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Services, the Tribal Leaders Council, off-reservation Native Americans, and DPHHS staff.

The purpose of the council is to provide assistance and advice to the department to ensure that program responsibilities carried out by the department are effective for Indian children and families and are respectful of tribal governments and Indian cultural diversity.

Members of the council are Patty McGeshick, chair; Tracy King, Loretta Rex, Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy, Alvina Allen, Mallory Real Bird, Carole Lankford, Joe Fox, Garfield Little Light, Louise Zokan de los Reyes, and Ernie Big Horn.

Screening Rate Improves for Breast, Cervical Cancer

The number of Native American women in Montana who are getting screened for breast and cervical cancer has doubled in the past few years, according to Sue Miller, manager of the Montana Breast and Cervical Health Program.

The program, administered by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through DPHHS, specifically began targeting Native American women in 2000.

In the first six months of 2003, the latest period for which statistics are available, 14 percent of Native American women were screened, compared to 7.1 percent in 2000.

DPHHS worked closely with the National Indian Women's Health Resource Center to develop the program.

For more information, contact Sue Miller, program manager, 444-3624 or sumiller@state.mt.us.



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